DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 243 631 RC 014 748

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TITLE Stage Universality in Moral Devlopment: Chicano Socialization.
PUB DATE Apr 84
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Social Science Association (25th, Albuquerque, NM, April 27-30, 1984).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Anglo Americans; Cognitive Development; *Cultural Differences; *Hispanic American Culture; *Mexican Americans; *Moral Development; Moral Values; Parent Role; Personality Development; *Socialization
IDENTIFIERS Chicanos; *Cultural Universal Hypothesis; *Kohlberg (Lawrence); Piaget (Jean); Piagetian Theory

ABSTRACT

The cultural universal hypothesis of cognitive development theory, as developed by Piaget and elaborated by Kohlberg, assumes that all individuals, regardless of culture, progress through the same series of six invariant stages in the development of moral judgment. The stages of moral development are transformations in the form of structure of thought rather than beliefs that are internalized from the environment. Therefore, individual differences in moral development should occur only in the rate at which individuals progress and in their final point of development. Kohlberg reports cross-cultural evidence to support the universal assumption concerning the first four stages, but not the entire developmental sequence. Consequently, whether stages five and six are more than representations of cultural specializations under determinable conditions remains a question. Further, there is an apparent gap in Kohlberg's theory between moral reasoning and moral action, because, given the underlying principles of universality and consistency, one's moral conduct should be predictable. The key question for moral judgment research on Chicanos is whether cross-cultural differences in moral development are the consequence of social experience or an artifact of bias in concepts, theory, or research methodology. Further research is needed. (SB)

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Rec'd May 23, '84

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CHICANO SOCIALIZATION

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Western Social Science Association, Chicano Studies Section (25th, Albuquerque, NM, April 27-30, 1984).

RC 014748

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Abstract

Cognitive developmental theory assumes that all individuals, regardless of culture, progress through the same series of invariant stages. The purpose of this paper is to examine the cultural universal hypothesis in regard to Chicano populations. Aspects of Chicano socialization and acculturation are discussed as potential sources affecting moral development. Suggestions are offered for future research on Chicanos.

STAGE UNIVERSALITY IN MORAL DEVELOPMENT: CHICANO SOCIALIZATION[1]

In focusing on Chicano populations, this paper investigates the cultural universal hypothesis of the cognitive developmental model of moral judgment (Piaget, 1965; Kohlberg, 1969). In the first section, the cognitive developmental approach to moral judgment is briefly presented. Chicano socialization is discussed in the next section. Several theoretical and methodological issues are addressed as they relate to research on Chicanos, highlighting cultural values, child-rearing patterns, and the Mexican American family. In the final section Kohlberg's approach is critiqued; suggestions for future research are offered in light of the heterogeneity of Chicano populations.

Let us now turn to a brief review of the cognitive developmental approach to moral judgment.

The Cognitive Developmental Approach to Moral Judgment

Piaget regarded both cognitive (1952) and moral (1965) development as comprising a series of culturally universal and invariant stages. He asserted that there are two qualitatively distinct stages of moral development:

> . . . in the [earlier] heteronomous stage, or the stage of moral realism, the child accepts rules as given from authority. In the second stage, the stage of autonomous morality, or moral independence, the individual believes in modifying rules to fit the needs of the situation (Wrightsman & Deaux, 1981:215).

Kohlberg (1981:409-412) elaborated on Piaget's approach and posited a 6-stage theory of moral reasoning.

From the cognitive-developmental perspective, changes in moral reasoning come about as a result of disequilibrium which would necessitate the reestablishment of an equilibrium. Turiel (1969) has demonstrated that when children

are exposed to reasoning at a level one stage higher than their own (the "+1" condition), disequilibrium occurs. That is, a child perceives a contradiction between his/her level of moral reasoning and the next higher one. In order to reestablish an equilibrium the child must accomodate to this higher stage. However, more recent evidence (Berkowitz & Gibbs, 1980) indicates that exposure to moral reasoning at a level one-third of a stage higher than the individual's pretested level induces the greatest upward change. The use of a less-than-full-stage disparity condition represents a departure from previous studies (Blatt & Kohlberg, 1975; Rest, Turiel & Kohlberg, 1969; Turiel, 1969) and suggests that the +1 definition of optimal disparity became established only because smaller disparities were not studied.

To summarize, Kohlberg, in agreement with Piaget, proposes a universal stage theory of moral reasoning that is essentially concerned with the development of aspects of cognition. However, Kohlberg's theory has been criticized for being culturally biased and ethnocentric (Simpson, 1974). Cultural differences in moral judgment may result from stage bias, poor testing procedures, variations in social experience, or a misguided attempt to capture multi-dimensional cultural variation on a unidimensional scale (Edwards, 1981). Edwards suggests that different moral judgment scales, all based on social role-taking, could be developed around different core values. For example, the core moral value of the Taiwanese is filiality, family loyalty (Lee, 1976). However, Kohlberg does not dispute that there are substantive differences in value systems across cultures. What he does propose is that the way people reason about core values fits a universal pattern of development.

We now turn to an examination of several aspects of Chicano socialization as they relate to core values and child-rearing.

Chicano Socialization

Child-rearing researchers (Bartz & Levine, 1978; Alvirez & Bean, 1976; Davis & Havighurst, 1946; Murillo, 1971) have reported that Chicano parents expect relatively early assumption of responsibility by a child and that children will overcome the dependency of infancy as soon as possible. Moreover, Chicano parents have been found to be more protective than black parents (Durrett et al., 1975) and more controlling than Anglo parents (Rusmore & Kirmeyer, 1976). Mothers are posited as warm, supportive and loving but offering minimal direction and discipline (Staton, 1972). However, this pattern of sex-role differentiation has been questioned in recent years (Hawkes & Taylor, 1975; Mirande, 1977). Bartz and Levine (1978:715) report that Anglo and Chicano parents had similar scores on emotional support and control of their children, but that both groups scored less than black parents on both of these factors. They also indicate that Chicano parents scored highest on "devalue permissiveness," indicating more support for permissiveness, less discipline, and more "giving in" by parents in parent-child relations. Chicano social roles, although they have undergone change, have remained remarkably traditional -- especially parental roles (Samora & Lamanna, 1972:236).

A great deal has been written about the Chicano family (Murillo, 1971). Peñalosa (1968) stated some years ago that neither empirical data nor an adequate theoretical framework exists for the analysis of the Chicano family structure. This remains true today. Acculturation pressures have forced the Chicano family away from the Mexican prototype (Martinez, 1977:30). "Instead there are literally thousands of Mexican-American families, all differing significantly from one another along a variety of dimensions" (Murillo, 1971:97). It is well known that the Chicano population is not homogeneous. Some Chicanos identify more with the Mexican culture and some with the Anglo culture.

Is it then possible to define the characteristics of the Chicano family that significantly differentiate it from its Anglo counterpart? There is empirical evidence to support this notion. For example, Derbyshire (1968) administered the semantic differential to adolescents living in East Los Angeles and asked his subjects to rate the concepts of self, mother and father. He found that girls identified more closely with the Anglo female and mother roles. Girls saw self and mother similarly, except that mother was seen as braver, more beautiful and wiser than self. Males, on the other hand, identified more closely with "machismo" and husband roles. Males viewed self and father similarly, except they saw father as more active and harder than self. It clearly appears that sex role differentiation exists among most Chicanos (Staples, 1971) although there is evidence (Ramirez, 1969) that young Chicanos are beginning to reject these traditional roles.

Olmedo, Martinez and Martinez (1976) developed an acculturation scale for Chicanos and found that the Anglo population is more homogeneous than the Chicano population and that the overlap of the Chicano population into the Anglo distribution is much greater than the converse. At the extreme end of the Chicano distribution, where it might be said that "Chicanismo" is defined, there were no Anglos. Conversely, on the extreme side of the Anglo distribution there are few Chicanos. Perhaps a more important finding was the mean score of Chicanos in a high school with only 10% Chicanos is closer to the Anglo mean than the means of students from other high schools where there were greater proportions of Chicanos.

Discussion

The stages of moral development are transformations in the form of structure of thought, rather than a set of beliefs absorbed or internalized from the environment. Hence, individual differences in moral development

are expected to occur only in the rate at which individuals progress and in their final point of development. Kohlberg (1969) reports cross-cultural evidence in support of the universal assumption concerning the first four stages although people in less complex societies do not attain the higher levels of judgment displayed by some people in "advanced" societies. Cross-cultural evidence is yet inadequate to establish the universality of the entire developmental sequence. Thus, a question remains whether the remaining stages (5 and 6) are more than representations of cultural specializations under determinable conditions. Perhaps, the criteria in the principles or post conventional level of morality is only characteristic of the intense individualism of Western European culture in the last two centuries (Edel, 1968). If so, this entire body of research is more an exercise in the celebration of a given social formation -- that of the researcher -- than a work of pure science.

The notion that a principled morality (stage 6) is higher than ones based on system maintenance (stage 4) or utilitarianism (stage 5) is based on the Rawlsian concept of justice (Rawls, 1971), parochial rather than universal, wedded historically to the liberal conceptions of natural law at the time of the French revolution, and developed to maturity in the writings of Kant (Sullivan, 1977). Piagetian and Kohlbergian moral problem-solving tasks are rooted in current limited scientific paradigms.

> These paradigms constitute cultural conventions integral to Western world views, conventions to which a great many cultures do not yet adhere. The theory of genetic epistemology [i.e., Piaget's stage theory of cognitive development] assumes that the view derived from adherence to such paradigms is correct, and therefore contains an inherent cultural bias (Mangan, 1978:170).

Perhaps the most salient criticism of Kohlberg's theory is the apparent gap between moral reasoning and moral action. In fact, one's moral conduct should be predictable given the underlying principles of universality (i.e., judgments any rational human being can follow) and consistency (judgments regarded as just regardless of perspective, i.e., that of the actor judging, the person(s) affected by the judgment, those removed from the situation) in stage 6 reasoning. Candee and Kohlberg (1980) are attempting to bridge the gap between deontic judgment (e.g., Is it right for Heinz to steal the drug to save his wife's life?) and moral action by analyzing normative judgment (e.g., Does Heinz have a duty to steal the drug?). Such an explanation of moral behavior would nevertheless be incomplete since, as Candee and Kohlberg suggest, it would have to include a theory of personality and a theory of society. In contrast to cognitive developmental theory which centers on the moral development of individuals, an alternative research strategy is to measure the moral development of groups. Thus, morality is conceptualized as a group phenomenon -- not individual. Accordingly, measures using the individual as the unit of analysis are methodologically inadequate. This view is based on the premise that the individual learns and internalizes the particular sense of morality enforced by his/her community. Moreover, morality is viewed as a social fact.[2]

The key question for moral judgment research on Chicanos is: Are ethnic or cross-cultural differences in moral development the consequence of social experience, as stage theory proposes, or are they an artifact of bias in concepts, theory or research methodology? Further cross-cultural research is needed to evaluate the relationship between social structure and psychological structure. The noted absence of postconventional reasoning (stages 5 and 6) in traditional and non-Western societies implies that the former

seems to be a unique characteristic of postindustrial societies. Comparative research is important for assessing the validity of the central premises of cognitive-developmental theory and is also crucial as a contribution concerning the antecedent factors in moral development.

Implications of research on Chicanos point to the importance of social experience as indicated by the norms, values and related moral stances of the Chicano culture. In light of the heterogeneity of the Chicano population, more attention for future research should be given to variation among Chicano children's background. The literature indicates that generation removed from Mexico, geographical location, area of residence (i.e., within a Hispanic community vis-á-vis an Anglo suburb), socioeconomic status, variation in family structure and sibling order are related to acculturation and socialization which in turn might affect moral development differentially. At this point, the relationship of socialization and child-rearing practices to the development of moral reasoning in the Chicano child has not yet been established; the suggested relations remain speculative, awaiting confirmation or disconfirmation by empirical studies. Current research by the author examining moral judgment in Chicano, black and Anglo young adults matched on age, sex and social status indicates no significant stage differentiation between groups (Cortese, in press).

REFERENCE NOTES

[1]In this paper the term "Chicano" is used to refer to all people descended in part from Mexico and living in the United States. In this sense the term is synonomous to "Mexican American," as in forms requesting specification of racial/ethnic background where the terms appear as interchangeable. However, some persons make a distinction between the terms and refer to Chicanos as those who support a particular political ideology or movement in relation to their ethnic heritage. Hence, an individual may refer to him/herself as "chicano" but not "Mexican American" and vice versa. These terms can be distinguished from the more general term "Hispanic" which refers to a broad group of Spanish-speaking people including Latin Americans and South Americans.

[2]This notion refers to Emile Durkheim's realist position in sociological matters. In view of his wholism, Durkheim posited a trans-individual psychology to go beyond a simply monadic view of social beings. Certainly, this was a reaction to Gabriel Tarde and his collective psychology. But, considering the preface to the second edition to The Rules of the Sociological Method, Durkheim clearly disavowed a simplistic conception of a "collective mind." A parallel to his position in the literature is that of Wilhelm Dilthey -- objectifications of the human mind. Given Durkheim's concern with an empirical basis for sociology (rather than a reflective sociology), the point of mediation always had to refer to a collective product, such as law, which he used methodologically in most of his works (e.g., The Division of Labor in Society, Suicide, his research on the family). Accordingly, the concept does not refer to an epistemological position, but rather to a methodological one. In any case, for Durkheim, the initial problem was a function of stability of social life; correspondingly, we find in him (as in Parsons later) an

emphasis on the normative character of social life. This classical position should in no way be taken as the only theoretical alternative, to wit the contrasting position of Marx, among others. Thus, although appealing to Durkheim, we are in no way assuming his position here.

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